

## Isn't It Romantic (Reddie AU) by ReddieForASloppyBitch

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**Summary:**

After an accident, cynical Eddie wakes up and finds himself trapped in a cliché romance novel.

A/N: There is no rape, but I've used the tag because there is a chapter where one character approaches another in a creepy, threatening way as if they might be planning to do something, but it's only implied



# 1. Chapter One

What did Eddie want to do with his life? He had been asking himself this a lot lately as seemingly everyone around him had a plan, a goal, a future. God, Eddie was starting to hate that word. *Future*. He couldn't escape it. It was all anyone could talk about.

There was Stan who had been interning at an accountancy firm since summer; Bill was taking creative writing classes and starting his first novel; Mike worked with Bill in a diner downtown - the same place he'd been at for three years - and had almost saved enough to travel around the world next year like he'd always dreamt of; Beverly was working as an intern for some big fashion corporation Eddie didn't really know but was apparently very impressive, and Ben was taking the same business class as Eddie. The difference was that Ben had a business plan and Eddie was just hoping he'd be inspired. He wasn't. Even Richie - laid-back Richie - had started booking fairly regular gigs in a few small comedy clubs.

At least he didn't feel a failure in his love life (or lack-thereof) as - with the exception of Stan and Bill who hadn't long moved in together - the Losers were falling behind in that department, so there wasn't much pressure to keep up.

"Earth to Eds?" said Richie, shaking his hand in front of his face. "Hello?"

Eddie came to from his thoughts and swatted Richie's hand away. "What?"

"You blanked out when I was practicing my new set on you," said Richie. It was hard to tell if this upset him because he was always smiling.

"I was just thinking," said Eddie dismissively. "Uh, you were talking about, um—"

"It's official," Richie threw his hands up dramatically. "My parents were right. I'm a failure."

Beverly flicked his ear. "No, you're not."

"They're going to laugh me off of the stage."

"Isn't that kind of the point?" asked Mike, chaining daisies together.  
"Make 'em laugh."

"This sucks!" groaned Bill, throwing his notebook down.

"Like Eddie's mom," said Richie quickly.

Eddie shoved him hard. "How do you do that so fast? Do you just wait for the opportunity to make jokes about my mom, asshole? That's fucking weird."

"Hey, I don't insult your interests," said Richie casually. "Well, I wouldn't if you had any."

"I have interests," argued Eddie. "Right now I'm interested in what Bill has to say so why don't you shut up?"

"You're so passionate, Eds," said Richie, throwing his arm around his shoulder. "You get that from your mom."

"Don't call me—"

"*Children*," said Stan, pulling at his secondhand tie. "I'm not spending my break listening to you two bicker. Bill was talking."

"Sorry."

"What sucks, Bill?" asked Ben, leaning back into the grass.

Bill gestured to his notebook. "This week's homework. We all got given a genre to write a short story in."

"So?" asked Mike. "You're a great writer."

"I write horror," sighed Bill. "I got romance."

"Romance is easy," said Richie, pushing his glasses up his nose.  
"They're all the same."

"Read a lot of romance, do you, Richie?" chuckled Mike.

"There is nothing wrong with a guy liking romance novels, Michael." said Richie, crossing his arms. "It's the '90s. Catch up."

"So wuh-what do I need?" asked Bill. "Other than a love stuh-ory?"

"There's got to be a bad boy," answered Ben. "They're in every romance ever written."

"That's true," said Beverly, lighting her cigarette. "A bad boy is always the same. Motorcycle, leather jacket..."

"What's supposed to be hot about leather jackets anyway?" Stan rolled his eyes.

"Yuh-You'd look good in one," shrugged Bill.

Stan quickly wrote something in his pocket schedule.

*Buy a leather jacket*

"What was that?" asked Richie, poking over his shoulder.

"Just something for my boss," lied Stan, shoving the book quickly into his pocket. "The bad boy is always *shockingly* well-read despite ditching school seemingly his whole life."

"And there's a 76% chance he's a sexy vampire," laughed Richie. "Also, they're always leaning on stuff. All the time."

"Don't forget the bitch who wants to fight the main character just because she wants the guy," said Beverly, pushing her hair back. "As if her only goal in life is to get together with a guy who isn't interested in her. And they're always, like, "caked" in makeup because God forbid women wear makeup to feel more confident."

"What do you think, Eddie?" said Ben, turning to him. "You've not said anything."

"I hate them."

"What?" said Mike, shaking his head. "All of them? But they're great."

"You've all been talking shit about them," said Eddie irritably. "What's to like? They're unrealistic and cheesy."

"That's what's so guh-great about them," said Bill. "Even Stan likes them."

"That's a lie."

"Like those makeovers where they take off their glasses and suddenly everyone thinks they're beautiful. What's that about?"

"I find that offensive!" said Richie, aggressively fixing his glasses.

"And in real life, if a guy climbs into your window at night, you call the fucking cops." said Eddie, making large gestures as he spoke. "Actually, adding to that, why does the lead like the 'Bad Boy' in the first place? They're always assholes who talk shit and are crazy possessive. I'd get a restraining order.

"Or, if it's not the Bad Boy they end up with, it's the best friend. I mean, am I supposed to be shocked that the attractive best friend they've known since childhood who they have a great time with is their one true love? Why does it take 365 pages for them to realise? It's pretty fucking obvious."

"Yeah," said Beverly slowly, looking between Richie and Eddie. "You'd think it would be, wouldn't you?"

"They must just be total idiots," said Stan monotonously.

"Total idiots," nodded Eddie. "That's why I hate— fuck, what time is it?"

"Just gone five," said Ben. "Why?"

"Shit, shit, shit." said Eddie, scrambling to his feet. "I told my mom I'd be home by five. I've got to go. See you."

"I'll go with you," said Richie, getting up. "Bye, guys."

Once they were away from the others, Richie spoke. "When's it going to be, Eds?"

"When's what going to be?"

"You're in your 20s, Eddie." said Richie, raising his eyebrows. "How long are you going to keep living with your mom? You're too old to be worrying about getting in trouble with your mommy."

Eddie wanted to tell him to shut up, to get mad, but he knew that Richie wasn't not-not-wrong.

"She needs me," he said simply. "I can't just leave."

"Listen," said Richie, stopping suddenly and gripping his shoulders.

Eddie held his breath. Richie had never done this before. He was always putting his arms around him or grabbing at him, but always in a jokey fashion Eddie knew not to take seriously. Now, he was being serious. It wasn't like him.

"What?" said Eddie, trying to keep his voice steady.

"You're not happy, Eds." said Richie, straight faced like Eddie had never seen him. "Your mom controls you and she manipulates you. You need to get out of that house before you get too old."

Eddie pushed Richie back. "What do you know? My mom loves me."

"I didn't say she didn't—"

"Just because your mom never gave a shit, doesn't make mine a bad person for caring about me a lot." said Eddie, turning around.

As he ran off, the last thing he remembered hearing was Richie scream and the tires screeching.

Then everything went black.

## 2. Chapter Two

*Brrring. Brrring.*

Eddie shot up and groaned. He grabbed the shiny clock beside his bed and hit at it until the infuriating noise stopped.

When had he gotten an alarm clock? Usually, his mother woke him up so he'd never seen the point in getting one. Had Sonia bought it?

He fell back into his bed, sinking into the soft, warm blanket.

*Wait.*

Eddie jumped up again, swinging his legs over the side of the bed and getting up. This wasn't his bed. He'd had the same thinning blanket since he was 14; this one was brand new, thicker, softer. He looked around and realised that everything had changed. It was as if someone had replaced every item in his room with a newer, better version of itself. Eddie opened his closet door gingerly, half-expecting something to jump out. Instead, he found his clothes had also been replaced. His polo shirts and old trousers had been swapped for smart button-downs, designers jeans and tidy trousers.

Had he won some sort of competition? That had to be it because God knows his mother couldn't afford all of this.

As if thinking about her brought her to life, he heard his mother call. "Eddie bear, I've made breakfast!"

Why had her voice sounded so sweet? It didn't matter. She'd be able to tell him why his room looked different. As he ran to the kitchen, he found that it wasn't his room alone that had changed. Everything in the house was different. It was all more stylish, more expensive...

"Mom," said Eddie, sighing in relief to find his mother at the kitchen sink. "What's going on?"

Nothing bad had happened. He knew most people would be ecstatic in his position. New clothes, new room, new house! But Eddie just felt strange, uncomfortable like the world wasn't letting him in on a



secret. He found it comforting to see his mother there.

"What do you mean, dear?" she asked, turning to face him. "I just made you the usual."

There was something different about her. Her wrinkles had smoothed out, her hair looked professionally styled and was that makeup? What was it that she always told Eddie? *Makeup is a whore's war paint*

"You look nice, mom," said Eddie hesitantly. "Did you do something different?"

She beamed. "Nothing different, dear, but that's very sweet of you to say."

What was happening? Sonia rarely smiled unless Johnny Carson was on television.

Eddie's eyes went to the table. Cereal. That was his usual breakfast. Some off-brand cereal his mom bought half price at the bargain shop downtown. This was not cereal. There were pancakes, bacon, sausages, waffles, three different types of egg and a freshly baked muffin.

"Did you make all of this?" asked Eddie unbelievably as he sat down at the table. "It's, like, seven in the morning."

"I've been up for hours," said Sonia, her smile unwavering. "I needed to go to the shop to buy flour for your breakfast muffin. We were out."

"Thanks, mom," said Eddie. He felt obligated to start eating. "You didn't need to do that."

"Don't be silly, dear," said Sonia, laughing affectionately. "Now eat up! You don't want to be late to class."

Ben would be there. Maybe Ben was normal. If anyone could help, tell Eddie what the fuck was going on, it would certainly be Ben.

Eddie rushed his breakfast down - it didn't occur to him until later

how strange it was that he didn't feel sick - and threw on some clean clothes without showering first for the first time in his life. It was all too weird. As he brushed his teeth vigorously - the way he always did when he was feeling anxious - he caught a glimpse of his reflection and spat out his toothpaste.

"What the fuck," he muttered, touching his face and then the mirror to check if it was real.

He was self-conscious to put it lightly. He had never exactly been confident but what confidence he did have had worn away over the years every time his mother had criticised his acne, his pasty skin, the bags under his eyes from not sleeping. None of it was in the mirror. Eddie looked airbrushed like those models on the covers of Beverly's fashion magazines. Every spot he knew he had had yesterday had vanished, no red marks on his skin to show they were ever there, not even a blackhead or the scar on his chin from the pimple he popped last month. And his skin was glowing. He looked as if he had vacationed in Spain for two weeks and spent the whole time on the beach. The bags under his eyes from years of worrying had been erased as if he'd never had a single problem in his life.

Eddie soaked it in, not sure how to react. On the one hand, this was all too crazy. What was happening? Why was his mom being so perfect? How was the house completely redecorated overnight? Why did he look so good? But wasn't this what he'd always wanted? His mother was loving, warm, affectionate just as he had always wanted her to be. His house looked like a page out of a housekeeping magazine. Every insecurity he had over his appearance had disappeared as they had never existed. He looked exactly how he'd always wanted to. The corners of his mouth turned up as he admired his reflection.

Maybe he was overreacting. This was a good thing.

It was a good thing.

### 3. Chapter Three

It wasn't just Eddie's house that had been affected, it was the whole city.

The homophobic graffiti that once covered the walls had been washed down and replaced with beautiful, intricate paintings. Every shop front had been repainted a fresh and bright new colour. What was most unusual about New York, however, was that every person Eddie passed had smiled at him; in some cases, people had even gone as far as to say, "hello" or "have a nice day." One strikingly handsome man had even winked at him.

It was terrifying.

As Eddie entered his classroom - which, of course, was just as pristine and vivid as the rest of the city - he clocked Ben over by his desk. He looked more-or-less the same, no extreme visual difference the way his mom had been, but maybe those were new clothes? Ben mostly wore comfortable clothes but now he was dressed like one of those mannequins outside Ralph Lauren. Other than that, though, there was nothing particularly un-Ben-like about him. It occurred to Eddie that maybe Ben knew what was happening. He usually did.

"Hey, Ben," called Eddie, jogging towards him. "I'm freaking out, man. What the hell is going on? Everything looks pretty and smells good, and everyone is happy to see me-"

"Not everyone," said Ben in a tone Eddie had never heard him use before. "What have I told you about talking to me? Don't do it. I don't know what the fuck you're talking about, psycho, or why you suddenly seem to think we're buddies, but we're not so sit down and shut up."

If it had been any of the other Losers, Eddie would have fought back - no one talked to him like that! But this wasn't Richie or Stan or any one of the Losers he'd expect to argue with. It was Ben - sweet, caring, wouldn't hurt-a-fly Ben - so Eddie simply said:

"Huh?"

Ben scoffed. "Idiot."

This time, Eddie had went to reply, but something stopped him. There was music. Where was it coming from?

*I broke a thousand hearts  
Before I met you  
I'll break a thousand more, baby  
Before I am through*

Eddie shook his head. Was the music in his head? No one else seemed to hear it. He looked around to see if anyone else was reacting to the sudden blast, but no one was. Everyone was staring at something intently, whispering to each other.

He followed their gaze to the front of the classroom and saw what had everyone's attention. The guy walking into the room wore a black leather jacket and dark shades that hid his eyes. There was something intriguing about him. The windows were all closed, yet there was a breeze sweeping through the man's thick brown hair.

*Bad to the bone  
Bad to the bone*

The mystery man took his shades off in - Eddie believed - slow motion, ran his fingers through his hair, and looked straight up to Eddie as if he knew he was there.

Eddie blinked. "Bill?"

Someone jumped in front of him and clutched his shoulders. For a moment, he went to run, but then he realised who it was.

"Stan!" sighed Eddie happily. "Thank God."

If anyone was going to be normal, it was going to be Stanley Uris. Stan was logical, intelligent, grounded. Eddie had complete faith in him.

"Oh em gee!" squealed Stan. "Can you believe Bill Denbrough has started here at our college?"

"What?" frowned Eddie. "You don't go to college, you're an accountant."

Stan laughed. "An account? Snooze!"

"But... What about Bill?" asked Eddie.

"You don't know Bill Denbrough?" gasped Stan, clutching his chest.

"He's your boyfriend?" answered Eddie slowly.

"I wish!" giggled Stan. "Bill Denbrough is from L.A. Everyone knows him."

"Why do you keep using his full name?" Eddie snapped. "And why are you talking like that?"

"Like what?"

"Like an offensive stereotype," Eddie said. "Of all the things I've seen today, this is the most disturbing."

Stan laughed again in a way Eddie had never heard before. It was loud and high, nothing like Stan's usually soft, low laugh.

"I've got to get out of here," muttered Eddie, swinging his bag over his shoulder and turning to bolt for the exit.

*Bang. Crash.* His head hit something hard and he fell to the ground in an embarrassingly clumsy fashion.

"Fuck," cursed Eddie, rubbing his head. "That hurt like a mother-"

A hand reached out in front of him. It was Bill's. Hesitantly, Eddie took the hand and pulled himself back up to his feet.

"Thanks," said Eddie plainly, going to move past him.

Bill grabbed his wrist and pulled him back. "What's your name?"

Eddie pulled his arm away. "It's Eddie. I'm going now."

As he headed out of the room, he turned back to look at his friends.

Bill leant against the back wall, his legs crossed, and smirked at Eddie like he was thinking something Eddie definitely didn't want him to.

He had been walking at first, but the more he thought, the faster he got. Everything was different. Why was it different? He was jogging now. How had this happened? He was running. What if he-

-for the second time in an hour, he crashed into someone.

"For fuck's sake," he grumbled. "Watch where you're going, asshole."

Then a laugh. A familiar laugh.

"You're the one who ran into me, Eddie Spaghetti," said Richie, jumping up. "Where you going in such a hurry, Eds? Is there a sale on fanny packs I don't know about?"

He didn't look different at all or sound different. Not one thing about him had changed. Richie spoke like he always did and laughed like he always did and dressed like he always did. It was Richie.

Then Eddie did something he had never expected to do. He hugged him. Eddie wrapped his arms so tightly around Richie that he almost couldn't breathe. He closed his eyes and breathed in Richie's scent - Eddie couldn't describe it exactly, it was just Richie.

"I'm so glad you're here," breathed Eddie.

Richie hugged him back. "Shit, Eddie, are you okay? What's happened?"

He knew it must have been something big because Eddie had never hugged him before, and definitely never like this.

"I can't tell you," said Eddie, pulling away but still clutching desperately to Richie's shirt. "You'll think I'm crazy."

"Crazier than you hugging me?" said Richie, smiling at him. Not his usual cheeky grin, but his lesser-known comfort smile. Eddie would never tell him, but he loved it.

"You'll tell me I'm batshit crazy and send me off to be with Bowers

back in Derry,” stressed Eddie. “And- And he’ll probably want to give me a fucking foot massage or something!”

Richie laughed. “Whatever you’re on, Eds, I want some.”

“This. Isn’t. Funny. Richie.” said Eddie, stomping back and forth across the path. “I woke up this morning and the whole world’s been, like, cleaned up! My mom’s being nice and Ben won’t talk to me and Stan is being weird and Bill is wearing a lot of fucking leather and have you seen how good I look today?”

“You look great,” nodded Richie. “But you’ve lost me with everything else.”

Eddie groaned. “This isn’t real! This whole place isn’t real!”

Richie’s amusement faded to concern. “Eddie, you’re talking like- Is that a bruise?”

Eddie’s hand went to his head and he winced. “Probably from where Bill Denbrough bumped into me.”

“Maybe you should see a doctor?”

“It’s just a bruise,” dismissed Eddie. “Anyway, aren’t you listening to me? We’re trapped in some beautiful fucking dimension!”

“Sure we are, Eds,” said Richie. “But let’s go to the doctors-”

“Hey, Richie!”

There was Beverly, the penultimate member of the Losers. At least, it must have been Beverly, but it looked nothing like her. Her short curls had been straightened and now fell past her waist. She usually only wore eyeliner if anything at all, but now she seemed to have on every type of cosmetic available. The makeup was so thick on her face, it could have been a mask. What was strangest to Eddie were the clothes she had on. Normally, Eddie thought Beverly’s clothes were cool - they were perfectly ’90s grunge - but now she was wearing something similar to Julia Roberts in the beginning of *Pretty Woman*. He almost felt dirty just being near her.

“Oh, Eddie’s here. *Great.*” Beverly smiled a sarcastic tight-lipped smile.

*Fantastic*, thought Eddie. *Apparently, Beverly hates me too.*

“He’s hit his head-”

Richie had more to say, but Eddie would never know what because Beverly had cut him off with a kiss. A long, sloppy, not-appropriate-for-public kiss.

Eddie felt a pang in his chest, then a sinking feeling like his heart was being squeezed by a ghost he couldn’t see. Suddenly, he felt the urge to throw something at them.

“Hey,” hissed Eddie. “I’m going to go find Mike. Maybe he’ll actually help me.”

Richie pulled away, looking a little dazed. “I’ll help, Eddie. Just come with me to see a doctor and we’ll go.”

“No, thanks, Rich,” said Eddie as he charged passed him, purposely pushing into him.

“Eds-” called Richie after him.

“Don’t call me fucking Eds,” he growled, though he was probably too far away for Richie to have heard.

*Eds is sacred.*

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

Don't worry! This IS a Reddie fic, not Kaspbrough - bear with it



## 4. Chapter Four

Mike lived in a small apartment a few blocks away - at least, he did in the real world and Eddie hoped that hadn't changed like so much else. He jogged there from the park, trying to focus on the main issue at hand and not what he had just seen.

Had Beverly really just kissed him? Did that mean they were a couple in this universe? Eddie didn't like that. He wasn't jealous. No, of course he wasn't. He just didn't like such big public displays of affection. Yeah. That was it. It was rude and—

It didn't matter. That wasn't important now.

He almost couldn't bring himself to knock the door. His hands balled into a fist, ready to bang against the wood, but he hesitated. Mike was his last hope. His mother, Richie, Ben, Bill, Stan and Beverly were all part of this insanity; if Mike was, too, then Eddie really was alone.

Maybe he would be stuck forever.

Eddie knocked.

He held his breath. There were footsteps behind the door. Someone coughed. Was it Mike? Keys jingled. The door knob turned. It was opening.

"Hey,"

"Hi, Kim," said Eddie, a little deflated to see Mike's roommate. "Is Mike in?"

"You're friends with...Michael?" said Kim slowly. "Michael Hanlon?"

"Yeah," said Eddie, slightly irritated by the silly question. "I am. Is he here?"

She furrowed her eyebrows. "Michael Hanlon?"

Eddie took a breath. "Yes. Michael Hanlon. I am his friend. What's so

weird about that?”

“Nothing, I just didn’t think he had any other than me,” she shrugged. “He’s at work at the moment.”

“Grey’s Diner?” asked Eddie.

“That’s the one.”

This was a good sign. Mike lived in the same building, roomed with the same girl, worked in the same diner... Maybe he was the same Mike from before. What if he was trapped here, too?

The bell above the door rang as Eddie walked in, announcing his arrival to no one in particular.

A woman left as he came in, leaving him alone with a group of ladies who took up a corner booth.

“Hey,” called the redheaded girl. “You.”

“Uh,” Eddie walked over slowly, hands in pockets. “Hi, you.”

Her friends giggled.

“Do you want to sit with us?” she asked, tucking a strand behind her ear. “There’s a space next to me.”

“I’m actually, er, just looking for my friend, but thanks,” his reply was awkward. He was not used to the attention this world was giving him. He wasn’t sure how he felt about it, but he knew he felt uncomfortable about the way these women were looking at him. Like dogs with a steak.

“Who’s your friend?”

The kitchen door swung open, banging into the wall. Eddie jumped at the sudden noise and turned.

Mike.

“Okay,” said Mike, carrying three full glasses. “Here’s your vanilla

milkshake, Beth, and your strawberry milkshake, Shannon, and your chocolate, Br—”

“You idiot!” screeched Br. Eddie didn’t know what the ‘Br’ started. Maybe Britney. She definitely looked like a Britney.

Britney now had half a pint of chocolate milkshake down her summer dress.

“I- I- I’m so sorry,” stuttered Mike, reminding Eddie of Bill during his rants. “I di-didn’t muh-mean to!”

His hands were shaking fiercely. Eddie had never seen Mike look so vulnerable. He was always so strong, physically and emotionally.

“Do you know how hard this stain’s going to be to get out?” the girls had stood up now, circling Mike as if he were their prey.

“I’m suh-sorry,” he whimpered, his lip quivered. “I’ll give you a- a refund and I’ll guh-get you a fuh-free drink on the huh-house.”

“A refund?” she scoffed. “I want fifty dollars to buy a new fucking dress!”

“I duh-don’t have fuh-fifty dollars—”

“Then you better find some money before I—”

Eddie felt his face go red. Now he was shaking, too, but not out of panic like Mike. How dare she talk to him like that? Mike. Good Mike. Always-there-for-you Mike.

He stepped in front of Mike. “Leave him alone.”

“Stay out of this, cutie,” she smiled, trying to push him out of the way. “This doesn’t concern you.”

“Leave him alone, you pathetic piece of shit,” Eddie wanted to sound strong, but it came out fast and at a higher pitch than he had wanted. “He fucking apologised to you. I don’t know where you got that cheap-ass looking dress from but you were ripped-off big time if it cost you a fifty so, instead of being a bitch, maybe you should thank

Mike for improving your outfit.”

She pressed her lips together, forming a thin line. “Let’s go, girls.”

The three walked together out of the shop in perfect sync like those swimmers Eddie sometimes saw on television with his mother. He briefly wondered if they practiced walking like that, then he remembered Mike.

“Mike, you okay?”

He was still shaking, not saying a word. Then he did something Eddie had not expected. He laughed.

“Oh, my goodness!” said Mike, his face beaming. “That- that was amazing! You just stepped in and you defended me! You’re like a superhero! Thank you so much.”

Eddie’s face dropped. This definitely wasn’t the Mike he knew.

“It was nothing,” said Eddie, moving towards the exit. “See you around.”

“Wait,” said Mike. “I can make you something? On me.”

Eddie’s eyes went to the table where the girls had sat. Two untouched milkshakes had been left behind.

“Do you want vanilla or strawberry?”

The first few minutes they sat together at the counter - the booth was sticky with chocolate milkshake - Mike had spoken excitedly about Eddie’s moment, but Eddie had zoned out. His only hope had gone.

“What’s wrong?” asked Mike, slurping the last of his shake through a striped straw. “You seem distracted.”

“What’s wrong?” Eddie began to ramble, not caring how crazy he sounded. “What’s wrong is that I woke up in a fucking parallel universe! And everything is wrong. Ben’s mean, Stan’s acting weird, Bill looks like a *Lost Boys* extra, Beverly hates me, Richie’s kissing other people in front of me and my mom is- well, actually, my mom’s

kind of better here, but it's still not normal. And now you're different, too, which means I'm all alone and I might be stuck here forever in this fucking cliché shitty romantic novel."

Mike's jaw dropped. "That's so cool."

"Cool?" stressed Eddie.

"Yeah!" nodded Mike eagerly. "Yeah, it's like a sci-fi."

"You don't think I'm crazy?" asked Eddie.

"I think you're as sane as I am."

Somehow that wasn't entirely comforting to Eddie.

Mike continued. "So who is she?"

Eddie frowned. "Who's who?"

"Your love interest," laughed Mike, wiping vanilla milkshake from his chin. "If you're trapped in a romance, then maybe the way out is to fall in love."

Eddie thought about it. It made sense.

"I don't know who my love interest is," he said eventually. "I- I'm gay."

He had never told anyone that before, but he supposed there was no harm in telling other world Mike. It was like telling a ghost. Yet there was something wonderful about saying it aloud to someone.

"Okay," nodded Mike casually. "So what guys have you spoken to today?"

"Well, there's you," started Eddie. "There was Ben—"

"Who's Ben?"

"In my world, he's one of my best friends," explained Eddie. "But here, he hates me, I don't know why."

"Maybe he's your love interest," suggested Mike. "He's picking on you because he likes you!"

Eddie snorted. "No, he just hates me."

"Okay, well, who else?"

"Bill,"

"Woah," gasped Mike. "Bill Denbrough?"

"What?" Eddie threw his arm outwards. "Yes, how do you know him?"

"Everyone knows Bill Denbrough!"

Eddie shook his head, knowing he would never get a satisfactory answer to his question.

"He's another friend," continued Eddie. "He's different here. He's cooler, I guess."

"You think he could be your romantic interests?"

Eddie thought about it. "I don't know. He's in a relationship with my other friend back home, but not in this place... I did kind of have a crush on him briefly when we were, like, eleven. I guess it's possible."

"Then that's what you need to do," said Mike. "Find Bill and make him fall in love with you."

## 5. Chapter Five

### Notes for the Chapter:

WARNING: No rape, but non-consensual kissing

Eddie paced back and forth his bedroom in the light of his stupidly expensive-looking bedside lamp. That had been a surprise, the sunlight. All-day, the sun hadn't shone but glowed. Everything was shown in a flattering slight and at no point did the world start to dim; this is why Eddie had been so shocked when the sky went black. It was as if someone had flicked a switch and turned the sun off, sending the world to sleep.

Eddie wished he could sleep, but how could he when so much had happened in a day? He didn't know what to think or feel. Strange, he supposed. He felt strange.

Could he really 'seduce' Bill? The idea was ludicrous to him. Sure, he had had a crush on him once upon a time, but that hadn't even lasted a full week and they were only ten-years-old for Christ's sake! Now? Bill was almost like a brother figure. Not to mention that Bill was in a long-term relationship with Stan; Eddie reasoned with himself that it wasn't a betrayal. They weren't together in this world and, even if they were, this world wasn't his world. It would be like kissing Bill in a dream. It wasn't real. It didn't count. So why did he feel so guilty?

He fell back into his bed - his stupid, comfy bed - and groaned into his hands. Usually, he would be more careful not to make noise when he was up late in case his mother came in and tried to make him take sleeping pills, but this mom would never do that so he felt safer.

"What's wrong?"

Eddie felt his heart stopped. He jumped up from his bed and went into a fighting stance - at least, that was what he was attempting to do. Then his pose softened and he stood normally, though he kept his fists clenched nervously.

"Hi, Bill," said Eddie, watching the boy anxiously. "How did you get

in my room?"

"I climbed through your window," he answered casually as if he had not just broken into someone's house.

"What the fuck!" exclaimed Eddie. "What the fuck, Bill! You can't just break into someone's room in the middle of the night, asshole!"

"I couldn't stop thinking about you," said Bill, his voice low. "There was something about you today. I feel like I know you."

Bill's gaze was intense, it burned through him. It was a look he had never seen on Bill's face.

"The only thing I did was tell you my name, you fucking creep!" said Eddie, throwing his arms outwards. "How did you know where I lived?"

"I watched you walk home from college," said Bill, leaning back against the wall.

Eddie furrowed his eyebrows. "I left school and I didn't come back here for five hours. Were you following me all day?"

Bill didn't answer the question. "You're special, Eddie. You're not like all those other guys, are you?"

Eddie, for once, was at a loss for words. This was all so ridiculous. If he were watching this on television, he would laugh, turn it off and go get a snack instead.

Bill flopped from leaning against one wall to the other like a trout on the deck of a fisherman's boat.

"Are you okay?" asked Eddie, not sure whether he should assist him or call the police (or whatever they had in this place). "Do you need to sit down? Are you dizzy? You might have, like, vertigo from climbing up the tree. I think we have some—"

"I'm fine," said Bill, putting his foot against the wall behind him. "I just don't like standing up straight."



Eddie frowned. "You left your muddy fucking shoe print on my wall."

Bill smirked. "God."

He moved towards Eddie slowly. His walk was confident, almost a swagger. Eddie backed away.

"Bill, stop—"

But he didn't stop. He backed Eddie into a corner and, as Eddie tried to duck away, he kissed him. Eddie pushed him off.

"What the fuck, Bill, I told you to stop!" spat Eddie.

He didn't know what the answer to his problem was but he knew it wasn't Bill.

But Bill wouldn't stop. A shadow grew over him. The lower half of his face was illuminated by Eddie's lamp, drawing attention to his clenched jaw. A shadow covered his eyes like a mask and Eddie couldn't tell if this made it worse or better because he was afraid of how his eyes looked at that moment.

Bill grabbed him. "We're meant to be together, Eddie."

This wasn't Bill. This was not Bill. This was not his friend. This was not the Bill that helped mend his scraped knee when he was six so that his mom wouldn't find out he had been playing games during recess; the Bill that ran to the pharmacy for him when they were eleven he had an asthma attack and his aspirator was empty; the Bill who had always had her back. This was not Bill. He kept repeating this in his mind.

"Geddoff me!" said Eddie, struggling to push him off.

The situation had been odd but almost comical at first, not-Bill stashing in through the window in the middle of the night like some weird fucking Peter Pan, professing love after one conversation - if you could call it a conversation - but it wasn't funny anymore. Not at all. At some point, Eddie's chest had gotten heavy.

*Just stay there, Eddie, I'll be right back. I promise.*

Not-Bill's hands tightened around him. His nails were trimmed short, but Eddie could still feel them making a mark on his skin.

"Eddie, I-"

"Mom?" called Eddie. "Mom!"

The bedroom door opened. It wasn't his mother.

## 6. Chapter Six

“Get off him,” said Richie, grabbing Bill’s arm and yanking it away from Eddie.

Eddie didn’t know why Richie was in his house - it made no sense - but then nothing really made sense here and, after all, he was just glad somebody interfered.

Bill shoved him back. “Piss off, fuck face.”

Richie’s glasses fell down his nose and he pushed them up, his hands shaking a little as he walked back towards Bill. Richie had outgrown Bill back in tenth grade, but Bill still seemed bigger somehow.

“Why don’t you piss off, Denbrough?” said Richie. “All that aftershave your wearing’s bad for Eddie’s asthma.”

Normal Bill was more a man of words than of action. If he were there, he would have had some wise words to impart or a sassy comeback, but that was normal Bill.

Bill curled his hand into a fist, brought his hand back and hit the side of Richie’s face. There was a crack and, for one horrific moment, Eddie thought he had broken Richie’s jaw, but it was his glasses that had snapped.

Richie tumbled backwards then quickly regained himself, punching back harder. There was another crack - and Bill didn’t wear glasses.

“Fuck,” said Bill, his voice muffled through his hands as he grabbed his face. “I think you broke my nose!”

Eddie watched in shock, jaw dropped a little as he looked back and forth between the two. It all happened so fast, he wasn’t sure what to do. Had Richie really just won a fight - a brief fight, but a fight all the same - against Bill? Now he knew this must be a dream. Even Richie, Eddie could have sworn, seemed shocked by the outcome.

Richie composed himself, owning the moment. He grabbed Bill by the shirt and pushed him out of the room.

“Let yourself out,”

If he had not been stopping the blood pouring down his face, Bill probably would have fought more, but instead he ran down the stairs and out the front door.

Richie turned back around to face Eddie, a goofy smile on his face, his glasses hanging on one side.

“I just won a fight,” said Richie, then his expression changed as he seemed to remember what had caused said fight. He quickly rushed to Eddie. “Are you okay? Did he hurt you?”

Eddie had meant to thank him but it came out as: “Why were you in my house?”

“I ran out of fags so I went to get a pack,” said Richie. “But my car’s in the shop so I had to walk. They were out at Clarence’s so I had to walk by here to go to Kite’s. I heard you shouting and the door was unlocked. Guess it was lucky, huh?”

Eddie could have rolled his eyes by how “convenient” this world was.

“Yeah,” said Eddie. “Lucky.”

“Can I use your phone?” asked Richie, already dialling. “Thanks.”

“Who you calling?” said Eddie, his head spinning from the quick turn of events as he tried to wrap his head around what had happened.

Richie waved his hand dismissively at him and spoke into the phone.

“Hey, babe, I’m at Eddie’s ... I was going out for cigarettes, but then ... Bev? Bev, I- Look, something happened ... I’ll tell you later, but I’m staying with Eddie tonight-”

Eddie furrowed his eyebrows. Was he staying?

“-just tonight ... I promise ... Okay, yeah ... Love you, too. Bye.”

He put the phone down.

“Weird,” said Eddie, sitting on the edge of his bed. “I don’t remember inviting you.”

“That’s because you didn’t, Spaghettis,” said Richie, pulling his T-shirt off.

Eddie’s eyes widened as he exposed his bare chest. He didn’t say anything until Richie started to pull his jeans down, too.

“What the fuck are you doing, Richie?” Eddie covered his eyes with his hands, not trusting himself not to peek if the strip continued.

Don’t look. Don’t look.

“Don’t worry, Eds, I’m not naked,” chuckled Richie. “Only your mom gets to see Little Richard.”

Eddie slowly dropped his hands. “So what are you doing?”

“I’m not going to sleep in jeans, Eddie, I’m not a freaking animal,” said Richie, climbing into Eddie’s bed and placing his glasses on the side.

Eddie stressed. “Why the fuck are you sleeping in my bed at all? What the fuck are you doing? What’s happening?”

“Look, Eds,” said Richie, propped up on one elbow. “Do you really think I’m leaving you alone tonight after what I just walked in on? I’m staying.”

Eddie blinked.

He looked at Richie’s naked face, strange without his big glasses but admittedly still very attractive - not that Eddie had ever said that out loud. His eyes were fixed intently on him.

God. He was an idiot. It was not Bill Eddie had to seduce, it was Richie. Not Bill. Richie. If it had not been for his relationship with Beverly in this world, Eddie would have realised sooner. Now it made sense. In these stories, the love interest is always with the wrong person at the start.

“Okay,” said Eddie lamely. “Thanks.”

He felt his hands shake a little - was it nerves or excitement? - as he gripped the back of his shirts collar, his arms crossed, and pulled it off over his head. Eddie had not taken his shirt off in front of the Losers since he was 14-years-old. That was around the age his mother had started commenting on how he looked, but this wasn't real. It was easier to be brave in dreams.

Richie took a small breath in, then cleared his throat. “Who knew cutie patoots Eddie Spaghetti was hiding a great bod under all those polos?”

Eddie face warmed as he got into the bed beside him. “Beep beep, Richie.”

It was only a single bed, one pillow. Eddie acted annoyed. He wasn't.